

**The Future of ABC:
A Five-Year Strategic Plan Proposal**

James M. Dubinsky
1st VP, ABC
Future of ABC Task Force Chair

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INTRODUCTION

At the 2006 Board of Directors' meeting in San Antonio, TX, the Board developed a set of six strategic priorities for the organization.

1. Strengthen the discipline of business communication.
2. Ensure that members can stay connected with each other through the use of communication technologies.
3. Improve the external perception of business communication.
4. Establish outreach services that benefit members.
5. Ensure a deep level of internationalization throughout the organization.
6. Improve the standing and rankings of our research journal and articles.

These priorities were discussed at the US Southeast regional meeting in March 2007, and the assembled group of over 34 ABC members agreed that the organization needed to move forward using these priorities as the foundation for a strategic plan. Shortly afterward, the current ABC President, Jacquie Harrison, and the Executive Committee commissioned a task force (The Future of ABC Task Force) to develop a five-year strategic plan to assist the Board of Directors in establishing and maintaining a long-term course of action for the Association.

At the annual meeting in 2007, the Board discussed a draft of the plan. In addition, an open session was held at the meeting to share a revised draft with the general membership. Following both sessions, the list of priorities was pared down to four:

1. Strengthen the discipline of business communication.
2. Establish outreach services that benefit members.
3. Ensure a deep level of internationalization throughout the organization.
4. Increase membership.

The document that follows is a working document, which is intended to serve as a guide for decision making and action, as well as a framework for future assessment of progress toward the achievement of our goals. Approving this plan does not guarantee that it will be fully implemented. Instead, approval indicates consensus around the proposed priorities, objectives, and strategies. As these strategies are implemented, their impact must be assessed by the organization's leadership, who then should review and revise the plan accordingly at each Board meeting.

Association for Business Communication: Strategic Plan

In this document, the Association for Business Communication (ABC) identifies and outlines the priorities our organization will strive to achieve over the next five years.

Our Mission

The Association for Business Communication (ABC) is an international, interdisciplinary organization committed to advancing business communication research, education, and practice.

Our Vision

The Association for Business Communication (ABC) seeks to become the foremost authority in the field of business communication by promoting excellence in teaching, increasing knowledge within the discipline, enriching business communication classes to better prepare students, and improving the quality of communication in the workplace. Because we recognize the importance of globalization, the Association seeks to continue to expand its international membership as well as its international point of view. To reach all members, we plan to incorporate many technologies for enhanced communication and provision of the services they most need.

Strategic Goals

Listed below are the Association for Business Communication's strategic goals for the next five years (2008-2013).

1. Strengthen the discipline of business communication.
2. Establish outreach services that benefit members.
3. Ensure a deep level of internationalization throughout the organization.
4. Increase membership.

GOAL 1 Strengthen the discipline of business communication.

Objective 1.1 To define the discipline of business communication, with respect to research, education, and practice, as an evolving and increasingly complex, international environment.

Strategy 1.1.1

Appoint a study group/task force to draft a white paper outlining a more sophisticated understanding as to who we are, what we do, and what value we add to the academic and practitioner communities. Use this definition to --

- a. develop persuasive talking points for use in discussions with nonmembers.
- b. inform faculty development efforts.
- c. inform the development of resources for members.
- d. decide whether or not our organization should change its name.

Strategy 1.1.2

Work with conference chairs to create program offerings in innovative curricula, new courses, and interdisciplinary communication that focus on the evolving relationship between business communication education and (1) technology, (2) critical thinking, (3) ethics, (4) problem-solving, and (5) cultural diversity.

Strategy 1.1.3

Devote a portion ABC's website to disseminating research and pedagogical information specifically focusing upon the relationship between business communication and (1) technology, (2) critical thinking, (3) ethics, (4) problem-solving, and (5) cultural diversity.

Objective 1.2 To set the agenda for discourse (research and practice) about business communication.

Strategy 1.2.1

Assert authority in business communication—and assert the importance of the discipline—by partnering with Sage or another established publisher to produce a series of books on business communication research and pedagogy.

Strategy 1.2.2

Solicit and publish articles about issues in business communication. Feature position papers about business communication on our web site. Ensure that these articles and other forms of information are disseminated to relevant constituencies in the academy, the profession and industry, corporations and foundations.

Strategy 1.2.3

Seek opportunities to put business communication on the agenda of both business and communication organizations. One possible avenue would be to encourage those in the organization who consult to broach the subject with their client companies.

Strategy 1.2.4

Seek support from business leaders testifying to the importance of business communication; publish and disseminate these testimonials. Place video clips of corporate interviews on web site, illustrating how communication affects the corporate environment.

Strategy 1.2.5

Reaffirm and strengthen ABC's relationship with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Ideally, AACSB should look to ABC for advice about best practices in business communication education.

Objective 1.3 To strengthen the academic environment for business communication.

Strategy 1.3.1

Monitor and protect the working conditions of business communication academics. ABC should produce a position paper about class size, workload, and other administrative issues that affect a business communication academic's ability to teach effectively.

Strategy 1.3.2

Provide information on our website about program administration and information/details about innovative curricula, new courses, non-traditional and interdisciplinary communications areas.

Strategy 1.3.3

Encourage investment in the discipline through marketing.

- a. Provide a press release about new officers and directors, and send them to deans and department chairs so that ABC leaders achieve more visibility on campuses.
- b. Compose and distribute a newsletter for deans, department chairs, and other business teachers explaining what we have to offer.

Strategy 1.3.4

Develop a model for certification and, once approved, offer certification visits from a committee of veteran teachers/scholars using, as a model, the model from the Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC).

Strategy 1.3.5

Monitor trends regarding the mix of tenure-track and non-tenure track business communication faculty in the U.S. and the world. Track the sources of PhDs and other terminal degrees.

Strategy 1.3.6

Provide workshops to develop business communication faculty's research skills. Topics could include finding research partners, developing theory in business communication, qualitative research methods, social network analysis, etc. The workshops could be at the annual convention or at other venues. ABC could resurrect its past practice of holding pre-convention and post-convention workshops.

Objective 1.4 To articulate the role of business communication to academic, professional, industrial, and public constituencies.

Strategy 1.4.1

Provide forums to discuss the role of business communication to the four constituencies: academic, professional, industrial, and public.

Strategy 1.4.2

Collaborate with business leaders regarding industry and professional trends as well as job placement and internships for our faculty.

Strategy 1.4.3

Publicize success stories in the academy, the media, and other relevant constituencies.

Objective 1.5 To collaborate with relevant organizations – academic, professional, industrial – to discuss basic and applied research in the discipline.

Strategy 1.5.1

ABC's officers should initiate discussions and collaborations with academic and practitioner organizations (e.g., AACSB-International, Academy of Management, Association of Teachers of Technical Writing, Society of Technical Communication, and National Communication Association) that have goals and objectives similar to ABC's and send representatives to meetings and conventions of those organizations. Possible results of these discussions might include—

- a. Working with these organizations to provide workshops, seminars and panels aimed at leaders and members of these organizations during their respective annual conventions.
- b. Creating a "state of business communication education" white paper, which ABC's officers would present at an annual meeting. This white paper could lead to a special issue of one of our journals to this topic.
- c. Offering joint conferences with similar organizations at both the international and regional levels.

Strategy 1.5.2

Consider affiliations as outreach opportunities for expanding ABC's membership and service levels.

Strategy 1.5.3

Build on-campus relationships with faculty in professional communication programs as well as in Communication departments to help eliminate territorial biases that separate these areas and encourage interdisciplinary perspectives.

Strategy 1.5.4

Increase professional development opportunities that are compatible with the needs, interests, and involvement of the practitioner community.

Objective 1.6 To enhance the reputation of ABC as a leader in creating learning outcomes.

Strategy 1.6.1

Encourage conference program chairs to sponsor/conduct a variety of workshops online and during regional, national, and international meetings which will increase members' abilities to teach communication skills and assess communication outcomes.

Strategy 1.6.2

Increase members' abilities to create and manage learning environments to encourage discovery and incorporate field experience and service learning?

Strategy 1.6.3

Dedicate a special issue of *BCQ* to assessment.

Objective 1.7 To increase the recognition of ABC members as leaders and advocates for business communication by elevating the reputation of business communication teachers and practitioners locally, nationally and internationally.

Strategy 1.7.1

Empower and encourage members to communicate to their communities the value of their contributions to learning and scholarship. Provide marketing materials when requested.

Strategy 1.7.2

Encourage members to promote the value of business communication to leaders in higher education, information technology, funding agencies, and campus decision-makers. Provide marketing materials when requested.

Strategy 1.7.3

Support recruitment of new and diverse talent to academic positions.

Objective 1.8 Improve the standing and rankings of our research journals and articles.

Strategy 1.8.1

Task the Publication Board to re-examine ABC scholarly journals in light of content and in comparison to competitive journals, placing emphasis on Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) rankings. Identify key stakeholders to conduct a process analysis.

Strategy 1.8.2

To increase the number and quality and variety of manuscripts submitted.

- a. Peruse ABC's conference programs' proceedings as well as the proceedings of select conferences from other organizations and invite authors of papers that show promise to submit revised manuscripts to *JBC*.
- b. Create a special features section to encourage a more diversified portfolio of manuscripts. This section could include a profile or interview of a noted businessperson focusing on communication, a dialogue among corporate communication professionals and academics on a communication issue (e.g. cultural literacy, the ethics of communication framing and spin), or the introduction of a theory from another discipline and its application.
- c. Track carefully articles that are frequently downloaded and try to determine emerging research trends. Attempt to locate authors working in those areas and solicit manuscripts from them (see a above).
- d. Ask editors to consider adopting more of a "pull" approach. The editor and associate editors (AEs) would more aggressively seek manuscripts that appear in Proceedings (see specific suggestions below), working papers, or as conference presentations.

Strategy 1.8.3

To increase the recognition and perceived quality of our journals by outside agencies, organizations, and institutions.

- a. Develop a strategy to get *JBC* included in the SSCI and other critical databases. Find out the criteria Thomson uses for ISI inclusion. Attempt to meet those criteria without compromising the integrity of the journal.
- b. Create an editorial board with top scholars from the niche areas. That may increase the visibility of the journal and help improve the perception of the journal.
- c. Encourage our members to cite research in our journals when they publish.
- d. Develop several recognized research niches for *JBC* (e.g. intercultural/international communication; written business, managerial, and professional communication; computer-mediated communication) so that

the journal has a clearer sense of identity, one that reflects our mission but also focuses on scholarly threads. This clearer identity could attract manuscripts from known researchers in the niche areas and have the journal cited more often by scholars doing research in these areas.

GOAL 2 Establish outreach services that benefit members.

Objective 2.1 Ensure that members can stay connected with each other through the use of communication technologies.

Strategy 2.1.1

Use focus groups and then a survey of the entire membership to find out what materials / functionality it wants on its website. Consider adding the following:

- a. Link buttons to other organizations aligned with ABC.
- b. PhD colloquium promoted as a network activity (listserv, blogs, egovernment).
- c. Virtual library accessed in members' section.
- d. Syllabi of innovative courses on the website. Look at the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) for a model.
- e. Curriculum for graduate programs.
- f. Open courseware movement (e.g., Tufts and MIT).
- g. Video clips of corporate interviews on web site, illustrating how communication affects the corporate environment.
- h. Useful information for those who are not business communication teachers and for the general public so that ABC becomes the recognized provider for certain types of expertise.

Strategy 2.1.2

Ask the executive director (ED) to email members each quarter and request updates on academic research and teaching strategies. Paste details into an email that could include media hits and current projects to ensure momentum.

Strategy 2.1.3

Revive an organizational listserv and promote its use, particularly among junior faculty and graduate students.

Strategy 2.1.4

Offer space on the website for members who consult as well as links to professional consulting organizations such as APCC.

Objective 2.2 Provide more substantive content for international members.

Strategy 2.2.1

Internationalize and localize web content (forums, blogs, etc.).

Strategy 2.2.2

Use regional languages in a multilingual format on the web (e.g., Japanese, Italian, Mandarin, French).

Strategy 2.2.3

Encourage authors in our journals to cite international sources.

Strategy 2.2.4

Link on-line publications available outside the USA on our website

Objective 2.3 To reinforce ABC membership as a year-round experience, rather than a once-a-year experience.

Strategy 2.3.1

“Push” communication to members on a regular basis throughout the year by reviving the BizCom email list and encourage membership to use more regularly (using ATTW’s listserv as a model), and provide links to the main website.

Strategy 2.3.2

Survey those who attend each conference for feedback and suggestions for future conferences. Ask which committees they would like to join.

Strategy 2.3.3

Provide support for committees and other working groups to meet during the year. For example, provide a budget or services for teleconferences; provide collaboration software through the ABC web site.

Strategy 2.3.4

Create a brochure for our organization.

Strategy 2.3.5

Work with the Web Board/Editor to make space available on the ABC website for members to share syllabi, assignments, lessons, activities, and classroom challenges.

Strategy 2.3.6

Build up the job board to be an active career center, including job postings, vita postings, vita and application material advice/examples, job hunting advice, discussion boards, etc. for academic and industry professionals.

Objective 2.4 To increase the emphasis on personal and group services.

Strategy 2.4.1

Create and advertise opportunities for members to meet, network, and share more regularly: local chapters, state/regional chapters, campus groups, and joint lecture/workshop series within regions.

Strategy 2.4.2

Increase the importance of and participation in the mentorship program, specifically in the areas of publication/research and mentorship of graduate students/junior faculty.

Strategy 2.4.3

Further support graduate students and junior faculty by encouraging organizational participation in conferences and committees, providing professional development opportunities in relevant areas, and creating a special interest group (SIG) or dedicated committee to bring this group’s concerns to the Executive Committee and the Board.

Strategy 2.4.4

Increase activity among SIGs, including Web discussion areas, email lists, and opportunities for SIGs to be recognized at conferences.

Strategy 2.4.5

Consider other ABC branded publications, including an ABC newsletter in the vein of the original ABC Bulletins from the early days of the organization; possible book/monograph series; open-source online textbook modules created by members; and/or an online case study repository.

Objective 2.5. Expand connections outside academia and make those connections visible and explicit with sections on the website devoted to allied academic and professional organizations.

Strategy 2.5.1

Forge relationships with important professional organizations in business and communication to provide more opportunities for members to network, broaden interests, share research/teaching resources, conduct joint events, connect with industry. Possibilities include

- a. Academy of Management
- b. American Marketing Association
- c. Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW)
- d. Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC)
- e. International Communication Association (ICA)
- f. IEEE Professional Communication Society
- g. International Association of Business Communication
- h. Society for Technical Communication (STC)
- i. Association for Women in Communication
- j. National Communication Association (NCA)

Strategy 2.5.2

Consider creating an advisory board of industry professionals to advise ABC on issues concerning industry, to provide support and advice for faculty looking into consulting or starting a writing business, etc.

GOAL 3: Ensure a deep level of internationalization throughout the organization.

Objective 3.1. Increase international membership by 20% by year 2012.

Strategy 3.1.1

Survey the organization's international members to learn more about their affiliation with ABC – Why did they join? What do they see as benefits of remaining members? What additional benefits would they like to see?

Strategy 3.1.2

Consider offering associate membership to persons affiliated with other international or regional organizations with similar interests to ABC's.

Objective 3.2. Highlight accomplishments of international members through creation of new awards. Seek corporate sponsorship of awards.

Strategy 3.2.1

Introduce awards which value work produced or educational success attained in languages other than English.

Strategy 3.2.2

Introduce awards which highlights ABC's student membership.

Objective 3.3. Design services that are in line with the organization's demographics.

Strategy 3.3.1

Review the organization's regional structure in terms of its ability to deliver meaningful services to the membership.

Strategy 3.3.2

Create interest groups focused on regional interests. These new interest groups may function in languages other than English, but should report in English to the larger organization.

Strategy 3.3.3

Recruit and retain staff with intercultural and language competence.

Strategy 3.3.4

Adopt a staff training program with contents focused on internationalization strategies, intercultural competence, and language skills.

Strategy 3.3.5

Adopt a language policy similar to that of multilingual international organizations which identify core working languages and others which may be used in specific circumstances.

Objective 3.4 Increase emphasis on international/intercultural issues and on encouraging international members to publish and cite publications in our journals.

Strategy 3.4.1

Encourage international collaborations; have space dedicated on website for discussion focused around international issues (to encourage relationship building and idea generation).

Strategy 3.4.2

Promote journals in new “international” markets.

Strategy 3.4.3

Recast the bibliography as an on-line “International Bibliography” (cf. Modern Language Association).

Goal 4 Increase membership.

Objective 4.1 To increase retention/renewal rates.

Strategy 4.1.1

Increase membership benefits such as

- a. Offering discounted rates on conference registration for members versus nonmembers.
- b. Providing more members-only resources on the web site.
- c. Encouraging members to activate and use their online journal subscriptions.

Strategy 4.1.2

Encourage non-members to join ABC by using techniques such as

- a. Offer current members a 10% discount (incentive) to bring a potential member to a conference.
- b. Promoting regional conferences to nonmembers by emailing communication, English, and business departments in local colleges and universities that have no ABC members.
- c. Ask members to submit the names of business communication faculty who are not members of ABC. Write to these members, including links to the web site.
- d. Offer discounted membership fees for the first year of membership.
- e. Following a convention, write to nonmembers who attended, encouraging membership.

Objective 4.2 To increase the diversity of ABC's membership by at least 20 percent with members from new and diverse communities.

Strategy 4.2.1

Market membership in the US to broader communities, especially Historically Black Universities and Colleges (HBUC) and Community Colleges.

Strategy 4.2.2

Recruit new members primarily from underrepresented ethnic and racial academic and practitioner communities.

Strategy 4.2.3

Provide mentorship, internship and fellowship (i.e., fiscal) support to enable women and minority group members to engage in and advance in their administrative careers. Obtain feedback and monitor successes.

Objective 4.3 To increase student membership.

Strategy 4.3.1

Provide more outreach to students on campuses and more visibility and benefits for student members. Focus on students in business, technical, corporate, and professional communication programs.

Appendix A: Future of ABC Task Force Members

Chair	
Jim Dubinsky	
Strengthen the Discipline	
Conaway, Roger	
Kryder, Leeanne	
Rentz, Kathy	
Shwom, Barbara	team leader
Thomas, Gail Fann	
Stay Connected -- Technologies	
Davis, Ken	
Hayashida, Hiromitsu	
Joyce, Marguerite	
Valentine, Deborah	
Wysor, Maryann	team leader
Improve External Perception	
Cyphert, Dale	
Davis, Barbara	
DeKay, Sam	
Galle, William	team leader
Goodman, Michael	
Hynes, Gerry	
Establish Outreach Services	
Bazzoni, Jana O'Keefe	
Bayliss, Marsha	
Dieterich, Dan	
Easter, Marilyn	
Pope-Ruark, Rebecca	team leader
Tuttle, Paul	
Ensure Internationalization	
Archibald, James	team leader
Poncini, Gina	
Pratts, Aida Andino	
Rogers, Pris	
Wardrope, William	
Improve Standings of Journals	
Andrews, Debby	team leader
Barker, Randy	
Campbell, Nittaya	
Hartman, Jackie	
Kolb, Judith	
Louhiala-Salminen, Leena	
Suchan, Jim	